

Assignment

Repetition and Pattern

While repetition in daily life can be a little boring - capturing it in your photography can create an image with real impact.

Life is filled with patterns - many of which we overlook due to the busyness of our days - however, once you get an eye for spotting them (and it takes your intention and some practice) you'll be amazed by what you see and you'll wonder why you didn't incorporate them into your photography before.

When it comes to capturing repetition in photography a couple of techniques come to mind - you can either **emphasize it** or **break it**. A few examples:

Emphasize the Patterns

Filling your frame with a repetitive pattern can give the impression of size and large numbers. The key to this is to attempt to zoom in close enough to the pattern that it fills the frame and makes the repetition seem as though it's bursting out (even if the repetition stops just outside of your framing).

Some examples of this technique might include faces in a crowd, bricks on a wall, a line of bicycle wheels all on the same angle etc. Almost any repeated appearance of objects could work.

Breaking Patterns

The other common use of repetition in photography is to capture the interruption of the flow of a pattern. For example you might photograph hundreds of red M&Ms with one blue one.

Sometimes you'll find these broken patterns naturally appearing around you and on other occasions you might need to manipulate the situation a little and interrupt a pattern yourself.

Broken repetition might include adding a contrasting object (colour, shape, texture) or removing one of the repeating objects.

Pay particular attention to where in your frame to place the break in the pattern. It might be that the rule of thirds comes in to play here.

Also consider your focal point in these shots - the broken pattern might be a logical spot to have everything focused sharply.

This assignment invites you to get out and take some shots that emphasize patterns and repetition. It can take a little practice to see them.

Repetition

When you repeat a certain size, or shape or colour you add strength to the overall image. Repetition is a basic concept in the world of art. If you want to make a statement, you repeat certain elements again and again. If you repeat something once or twice it becomes more interesting. If you repeat something many times it becomes a pattern and takes on a life of its own. Patterns give us order in an otherwise chaotic world. There's something pleasing about seeing order in such a way that we know what to expect. In most cases, repetition is a tool used to calm the viewer, making them feel comfortable and at peace while enjoying the view.

A single, simple subject with a plain non-distracting background definitely has its strengths, but it is NOT the only way to keep a viewers attention. Patterns are to photography, what Rhythm is to music. Without the limitation of just a single point of interest, repetition helps your eye dance from point to point. You are not asked to make a judgement of the subject, simply to explore it. The goal here is not to just witness a good photograph, but to experience it. Thus, when repetition is used correctly . . . it can greatly increase the emotional impact of your images.

Patterns and repetition can be found all around us: a row of trees, a field of sunflowers, or a line of children waiting for a bus. In the world of Close-Up Photography, you will start to discover a whole new world of patterns. Often things that you perceive as solid or even as a single texture are made up of much smaller patterns.

Look at the surface of an orange for example. Each dimple, each bump, each hill or valley contributes to what most viewers consider one smooth surface. Of course not all repetition is 100% uniform. Think of a choir in concert, every individual may be wearing the same robe, or suite, or dress to represent their organization . . . but they are still all individuals. Like most things, too much of a good thing can become bad (or stale or boring). What at first seems unique now becomes common place, or worse yet . . . out of place.

The most common way to keep repetition from becoming boring is to deliberately "break" the pattern. Think of a fruit stand with an entire box of big red juicy apples. Now take one of those apples out and replace it with an orange. This technique is often referred to as creating a "Spot". A spot is nothing more than the deliberate use of opposition to force the viewer to look again and again. It may seem overly simple, but changing a single element in your shot can often make the difference between boring and fascinating.

Keep patterns and rhythm in mind when you line up a number of people for a group portrait. Here you will be dealing with similar shapes. Try to place them in a pleasing pattern. Start with three people and have them line up so that their heads form a triangle. As you add people form another triangle. You are adding to the pattern by creating a rhythm of triangles that dance together. A group of nine people on their own could form an ugly mob . . . or they could form a very pleasing family portrait if you use the concept of repetition.